UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
35th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 16 November 1993
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman:	Ms. AL-HAMAMI (Vice-Chairman)	(Yemen)
later:	Mr. KUKAN (Chairman)	(Slovakia)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/48/SR.35
28 December 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

93-82438 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/48/3 Chapter VII.C) (A/48/38, A/48/98, A/48/124-S/25506, A/48/182, A/48/187-E/1993/76, A/48/279, 301, 338, 354, 359, 413, 513, 546 and 591; A/C.3/48/6 and 10; A/C.3/48/L.5)

1. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that the World Conference on Human Rights had reaffirmed the United Nations commitment to the principles set forth in the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had stressed, in that context, the need to accord priority to the realization and strengthening of women's rights, calling for full incorporation of women into the United Nations system. Millions of women were still the object of discrimination that deprived them of full enjoyment of their political, civil and economic rights. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would make the goal of abolishing such discrimination a priority, owing to the direct impact which that would have on strengthening the link between women's rights and economic and social development.

2. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and noted with satisfaction that an increasing number of countries had subscribed to the Convention. It hoped that the United Nations would be able to realize its goals of increasing the overall percentage of women on the staff of the Secretariat to 35 per cent and the percentage in posts higher than the D-1 level to 25 per cent, for that would serve as a model to be followed by Member States.

3. His delegation welcomed the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) and hoped for its early adoption. It likewise welcomed Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/46 (condemning all acts of violence against women) as well as the initiative of that Commission in appointing a special rapporteur for that topic.

4. The Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995, would serve as a springboard for the efforts of the international community towards achieving equality and strengthening women's rights in various fields. It was time that the international community undertook a comprehensive review of the progress made since the Nairobi priority-setting meeting.

5. The preparatory work for the Conference was of special importance. His delegation emphasized the need to provide adequate resources for the Conference out of the regular budget of the United Nations on the same basis as with other conferences, and of providing the Commission on the Status of Women with the necessary resources to enable it to carry cut the preparatory work for the Conference properly.

6. His delegation urged nations to devote greater attention to women in developing countries, so as to enable them to participate effectively in the economic and social development plans of their communities.

7. Ms. ARGUETA (El Salvador) hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 would provide an opportunity to renew the commitment of the international community to achieving the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-

(Ms. Arqueta, El Salvador)

looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 and lay down guidelines for future work. The success of the Conference would to a large extent depend on the contribution made by all relevant United Nations bodies, Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Her country would continue to attach great importance to the holding of the Beijing Conference and had already undertaken preparatory work at the national level. It would actively participate in the regional preparatory meeting and the Conference in order to identify obstacles and find lasting solutions aimed at enhancing the status of women in the world.

8. In spite of the difficulties that still confronted women, she noted with satisfaction some positive achievements, particularly the inclusion of the rights of women in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action as well as the progress achieved in drawing up the draft declaration on violence against women, which she hoped would be adopted at the current session.

9. After the signing of the peace accords, El Salvador was experiencing reconciliation and reconstruction. Certain encouraging progress had been made in focusing special attention on the protection of women and providing them with better opportunities. She drew attention to the important collaboration between UNHCR and UNIFEM, whose programmes were designed to meet the specific needs of women and achieve speedy results. The objective was to establish the necessary linkage between emergency assistance and development in view of the great importance of supporting fundamental human rights in order to bring about lasting solutions.

10. In cooperation with UNDP and UNIFEM, her Government had been implementing and evaluating a number of development projects relating to production, institution-building, training, research and services. Such services provided legal counselling and enhanced awareness of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In September 1993, the Salvadorian Legislative Assembly had adopted a new family code, which guaranteed effective implementation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution. Lastly, she stressed that, in spite of the efforts carried out in various regions of the world, there were still alarming situations, particularly in developing countries, which required greater awareness and consideration in order to eliminate such phenomena as extreme poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and international migration.

11. Mrs. ROMULUS (Haiti) hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 would promote implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Women played a dominant role in Haitian society, constituting 49 per cent of the economically active population. In spite of their contribution to the country's cultural, economic and social life, they nevertheless had not been fully integrated into society. Haitian women frequently had to face intolerance, marginalization, violence and the widespread poverty resulting from the status quo. Being women, they were relegated to inferior status. In spite of the current repression in Haiti, her delegation was encouraged by the success of women's movements and hoped for a better tomorrow and a democratic society capable of creating a favourable environment for full exercise of human rights.

(Mrs. Romulus, Haiti)

12. Rural women in Haiti were the basis of the Haitian family and social structure. They fulfilled numerous and various tasks as wives, mothers, teachers and healers and also took part in agricultural work. Their readiness to participate in community groups and the presence of non-governmental organizations in the country had slightly improved their way of life and their understanding of the problems facing them. Rural women must be taught to read and write through an effective education system and encouraged to participate actively in local organizations promoting methods of hygiene, birth control and primary health care. The necessary infrastructures must be established for preventive and curative measures. Women must be integrated into programmes introducing new crops, low-cost soil-fertilization techniques and modern soil- and water-conservation methods.

13. Research must be carried out in food production and storage techniques in order to increase food resources and income. Women must be able to participate actively in measures to combat environmental degradation and should be encouraged to form coalitions for gathering information, identifying problems and exerting pressure to change policies. There was a need to prevent women from sexual harassment. Rape must be redefined and women's rights guaranteed by law. Men and women must be encouraged to re-examine their attitudes and analyse society's prejudices concerning violence against women. Lastly, there was a need to take fully into account women's contribution to building the social structure.

14. Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that her Government was looking forward to the Fourth World Conference on Women and had established a national preparatory committee to lead activities for the Conference at the national level and preparing her country's report on implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. It was gratifying to note the continuing support of UNIFEM for the efforts of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women to mainstream gender-related questions in six key departments of the Philippine Government. Her country was particularly concerned about violence against women and had actively participated in drawing up the relevant draft declaration, which she hoped would be adopted at the current session of the General Assembly.

15. Her delegation had focused attention at the previous session on the continuing reports of grave abuses and acts of violence against women migrant workers and had introduced General Assembly resolution 47/96 on that question, in order to increase awareness of the plight of those women and encourage close cooperation between countries of origin and countries of employment in order to protect their rights. In that connection, her delegation was pleased to report that the Philippine Government had recently signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families and stressed the need for more Member States to do likewise. Similarly, she stressed the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for the advancement of women and hoped that its universal ratification, without reservations, would be achieved before the Beijing Conference.

16. An essential step towards enhancing the status of women was to measure and set a value on their current work. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino women had devised a number of methodologies for quantifying housework,

(Mrs. Limjuco, Philippines)

including the opportunity-cost-method of evaluation, the market-valuation approach, and the individual-income model. While the aim of those methodologies was to underscore the value and dignity of the unpaid contribution of women, rather than to arrange for remuneration, national development policies must respond to women's issues and problems and be formulated in consultation with women. Lastly, her delegation supported the streamlining initiated by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization's capacity to promote the status of women and optimize utilization of existing resources. In that connection, she stressed the need for careful, long-range planning, taking into account the necessity to avoid serious dislocations in terms of staff and resources.

17. Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania) said that it was essential to identify the profound causes which were preventing women from playing their political, social, cultural and economic roles. Women were more affected than men by socio-economic difficulties in their countries, particularly those caused by structural adjustment policies, which limited their opportunities further with regard to education, health care and employment.

18. Women had an important and valuable contribution to make to democracy and development, which should be taken fully into account. In developing countries, they were severely affected by the ongoing economic crisis resulting from the inequities of the international economic system, the deterioration of terms of trade and the debt burden.

19. All development strategies should focus on the general situation of women and take account of their basic needs in the areas of employment, education, health care, and access to capital. There was a particularly urgent need to improve the condition of rural women, women refugees and victims of upheaval. In addition to legal measures to guarantee the rights of women, information and communication systems must be used to heighten public awareness, particularly on the part of women themselves, of the importance of those rights and the need to implement them.

20. The long-term objective should be to transform social structures and attitudes in order to bring about true emancipation of women, which was essential for sustainable development. Mauritania pursued that goal and was committed to ensuring the advancement of women and their participation in national life. A ministerial department headed by a woman dealt exclusively with the advancement of women and coordinated national policy in that field. In that way, women were becoming increasingly active in all sectors of life.

21. Particular emphasis was placed on education for young girls and on developing a woman's cooperative movement. Nevertheless, in spite of the national commitment thereto, there were many obstacles to overcome. The status of women could not be improved while general socio-economic conditions were deteriorating. In order to revitalize the economies of developing countries, a world-wide partnership was necessary to bring about true international development and cooperation. The international community today had a unique opportunity to solve the enormous problems confronting it and create the necessary conditions for the emancipation of all women. The success of the

(Mr. Ould Mohamed Lemine, Mauritania)

Fourth World Conference on Women would be evaluated on the basis of the degree to which it enabled the international community to take up that challenge.

22. Mr. TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that despite the immense contribution which women made to the economic, social, cultural and political life of his country, they did not usually benefit from their labour and did not enjoy equal opportunities. Most Ethiopian women worked in the informal sector and the gross national product (GNP) failed to reflect their contribution. They were not considered part of the productive force and did not receive a fair share of the country's resources.

23. Factors such as environmental degradation, malnutrition, hygiene and limited access to family means affected mothers. While half of the country's agrarian population consisted of women, they were not allowed to own property as a result of legislation designating men as the sole owners of land. Women were subjected to similar discrimination in education and employment opportunities. Discrimination extended also to citizenship rights, family codes, pension law and the administration of justice.

24. The transitional Government had been committed to improving the status of women, especially rural women. The national policy on women was designed to encourage the integration of gender issues in the overall development programmes of the country. The democratization process on the way in Ethiopia could be fully achieved only if women were given equal opportunities. Appropriate Government offices were being established with a view to ensuring equal access of men and women to the country's resources and decision-making process. There was already a significant representation of women in the highest social echelons and in the Government, including ambassadorial positions.

25. Ms. SAPCANIN (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that a true test of the international community's commitment to the advancement of women and to the improvement of their status would be its response to the plight of women in Bosnia. The ongoing aggression, perpetrated by the Serb military and paramilitary forces and supported by the "apartheid Belgrade regime", had led to millions of people being forced to abandon their homes, their land and often their families and friends in search of safety. An estimated 200,000 people had been killed or were unaccounted for, and there were 2 million refugees or displaced persons. More than 80 per cent of the victims and displaced were women and children.

26. Although mass rapes and atrocities were not new in history, the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina was unique in that it might be the first time mass rapes and forced pregnancies had been used openly as a policy and a definite overall strategy towards genocidal ends. According to independent sources, at least 20,000 women and girls, and perhaps as many as 50,000 of all ages, the majority of whom were Bosnian Muslims, had been exposed to unspeakable tortures and gang rapes, then kept in rape/death camps until they gave birth.

27. Women were protected against rape under various international instruments and rape was a deplorable and illegal act of violence in every country in Europe including the former Yugoslavia; systematic rape had been denounced by both the United Nations Security Council and the Council of Ministers of the European

(Ms. Sapcanin, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Community. However, while for nearly two years the international community had been contemplating ways to stop the genocide through negotiations with the perpetrators and, while it had abhorred and condemned human rights abuses, the seizure of territory by force and ethnic cleansing, little had been done in practice to bring an end to the plight of women in Bosnia. In addition, the international community had blocked the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus denying Bosnians their inherent right to defend their statehood. More alarming was the possibility that some United Nations personnel might have taken part in the rapes and abuses as guests of Serbian soldiers in the "rape camps". The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina had requested the Secretary-General to investigate fully those charges and report them publicly.

28. While her delegation welcomed the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, it was disappointed that only two women had been elected to serve on it. Her Government was committed to protecting the victims of rape and would take all necessary steps to rehabilitate them and make them fully functional members of society.

29. Mr. Kukan (Slovakia), Chairman, took the Chair.

30. Mrs. VALLE (Cuba) said that she hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women would devote particular attention to three basic objectives: equality, development and peace. While some progress had been made with respect to the development of national legislation, poor socio-economic conditions in many developing countries continued to affect millions of women. Only an equal and fair national and international order would bring about appropriate conditions for the full advancement of women.

31. One of the positive aspects of the June 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights was the inclusion of the issue of women in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. She hoped that special attention would be focused on that issue in the follow-up measures to the Vienna recommendations. The draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women was important since violence constituted a serious violation of women's rights and was an obstacle to their full integration into development. Cuba, which supported the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women encouraged States which had not yet acceded to the Convention, to do so. Cuba was concerned that efforts to increase the number of women in the Secretariat were moving very slowly; the principle of equality of opportunities must be applied as soon as possible.

32. A widespread dissemination campaign must be waged on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women; it must be supported by the whole United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations. The proposed merger of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women must be studied very thoroughly before being implemented in order to ensure that the functions that contributed to the strengthening of research, action and training programmes for the advancement of women would be maintained.

33. Mr. WEERAWEDPHISAI (Thailand) said that preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women must seriously address key issues such as poverty, illiteracy, violence, decision-making, health care and refugees. In order to address those problems, activities at the international, regional and national levels, including those of non-governmental organizations, must be better coordinated. Thailand commended the United Nations organizations for their work in preparing for the World Conference. It also welcomed the outcome of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights which reaffirmed women's rights as an integral part of human rights.

34. Since Thailand had always attached great importance to the advancement of women, it had acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and many old laws and regulations had been revised to bring them in line with the Convention's objectives. It hoped soon to lift its remaining reservations to the Convention. Moreover, the National Commission on Women's Affairs had played an important role in revising the long-term Women's Development Plan for the period 1982-2001, and had incorporated various guidelines and measures from the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and CEDAW provisions into its current five-year Seventh National Development Plan (1992-1996).

35. Since the participation of women in development was vital to national prosperity, the Government was determined to eradicate the two fundamental problems of poverty and the lack of education to help empower the role of women in Thai society. In that regard, the Queen of Thailand had inspired the establishment of the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Techniques which had generated employment and extra income for many of the nation's poorest citizens and their families, especially in the rural areas. It had enhanced the status of women throughout the country.

36. The lack of education among Thai women placed them at a distinct disadvantage. The Government had therefore taken measures to increase literacy, particularly legal literacy, among women by providing both formal and informal education and training. The subject of women's legal literacy should be included in the draft platform of action to emerge from the Fourth World Conference on Women.

37. His delegation strongly condemned the abhorrent practice of rape and abuse of women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an instrument of ethnic cleansing. Priority attention must be paid to the issue of violence against women at the Fourth World Conference on Women and his delegation supported the adoption, of a draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women as it was an important step in the promotion and protection of women's rights.

38. Mrs. RAOELINA (Madagascar) said that women were still stereotyped as housewives in most parts of the world. However, no one could ignore the fact that they played a particularly important role in the economy and society; they produced up to 80 per cent of foodstuffs in the third world and were responsible for between 60 and 80 per cent of the rural work done in Asia and Africa. Increasing poverty of rural women was one of the most alarming global trends.

39. In that connection, the Fourth World Conference on Women should take stock of progress made by women since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking

(Mrs. Raoelina, Madagascar)

Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, mobilize women and men leaders and ordinary citizens in favour of those objectives and adopt a platform of action. Globally, those objectives were meant to respond to the major practical concerns of women such as health care, education, employment and violence against women. In that connection, she welcomed the proposed adoption at the current session of the General Assembly of a draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

40. A national workshop had been held in Antananarivo in 1992, entitled "Women and Development", organized by the Ministry of Population, UNICEF and the French Cooperation Mission in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995. In 1993, regional workshops had been organized at the provincial level, to promulgate groups on the issues of women and development and to devise regional action plans for Madagascar.

41. Although in Madagascar private law with regard to women was influenced by French private law, it nevertheless prompted the legislature to advance the status of women. Furthermore, the preamble to the new 1992 Constitution imposed the campaign against injustice, inequality and discrimination, which was the necessary precondition for human development. Furthermore, Madagascar had acceded to or ratified a number of international conventions on the protection of women and children, the elimination of discrimination against women, equal remuneration and equal employment rights. The Administrative Chamber and the Constitutional High Court were the authorities responsible for monitoring equal rights for women. In 1976, Madagascar had established the Ministry of Population and Social Affairs, which included a Directorate on the status of women and children, the purpose of which was to monitor the status of women, to implement the national policy of the participation of women in economic, social, and political development, and to coordinate the activities of organizations and associations for improving the status of women. The Directorate worked in partnership with non-governmental organizations to implement projects involving development for women; one example was a project on employment training for women in rural and urban environments, financed by UNDP and co-sponsored by the International Labour Office.

42. Though there existed ample texts granting to women the same civil rights as men, women were often insufficiently informed of the resources to which they were entitled by law. In order to redress the problem of inequality, legal literacy had to become an international priority, and women had to enjoy basic education and access to information.

43. Lastly, the principal objective of the Fourth World Conference for Women should be to improve the general welfare of women in the areas of health, nutrition and education, the enhancement of their physical and psychological development, and the creation of an environment conducive to sustainable development.

44. Mrs. DIAKITE (Mali) said that her delegation commended the considerable number of States that had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and urged all States that had not yet ratified that Convention to do so before the Fourth World Conference for

(Mrs. Diakite, Mali)

Women. It also appealed to States that had ratified that Convention with reservations to reassess their positions so as to attain its goals.

45. Mali hoped that the Fourth World Conference for Women would find solutions to the many problems facing women, with emphasis on women in developing countries, who constituted half the women in the world. In the view of Mali, the numerous non-governing organizations without consultative status with the Economic and Social Council should be permitted to participate in all the preparatory phases of the Conference, thus ensuring representation for the broadest possible number of women. Mali promised its full support to the Conference and urged donors to pledge their support for the participation of African women.

46. Furthermore, African women demanded implementation of the recommendations that had arisen out of the World Summit on Environment and Development in Rio, and called for broad participation of African womens' non-governing organizations in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen.

47. She vigorously condemned the rape and torture of women and demanded that energetic measures should be taken to put a step to such atrocities. Her delegation pointed out, however, that African women were subject to other forms of violence intrinsic to cultural tradition. Fortunately, many countries were working towards putting a stop to such practices.

48. The number of women and children refugees had rapidly risen, especially in Africa; social welfare measures should be taken for their protection, and access should be provided to basic education and career training.

49. While her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to the promotion of women in the Secretariat, it regretted the continuing imbalance in regional and linguistic representation.

50. The new democratic Government of Mali, installed in 1991, had enacted a new Constitution, which stipulated that the State was committed to defending and protecting the rights of women and children. It had also ratified the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had modified various legislative and regulatory texts accordingly. Malian women were organizing associations for social, economic, cultural and political development, and for the defence of their rights. They were actively involved in agriculture and the informal sector, and increasing numbers worked in business or owned their own export-import companies.

51. In 1992, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference for Women, Mali had organized an inter-African meeting on women in development, which had brought together 115 participants from 25 African countries and from France. The National Workers Union of Mali (EUTM) had undertaken a national business training programme for women workers who had lost their jobs owing to structural adjustment programmes (SAP) undertaken between the Government of Mali and international financial institutions. To date, more than 100 women had been trained throughout the country. Unfortunately, the businesses which they had launched were running into financial difficulties. Mali appealed to the

(Mrs. Diakite, Mali)

international community to lend its financial and technical support towards continuation of those projects.

52. The Department for the Promotion of Women was cooperating closely with women's NGOs in order to find ways and means for integrating women into decision-making and development bodies. Furthermore, Malian women had played a significant role in peace-building and peace-keeping during the conflicts in the northern regions of the country. With the return of peace, they had vigorously worked to reintegrate displaced populations, especially women and children, into social and economic life.

53. Mali had also received invaluable assistance from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its policy regarding the development and promotion of women. Owing, as well, to the efforts of UNIFEM, great numbers of African women had attended the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and were actively participating in NGOs. Mali also welcomed the commitment of UNIFEM to assist African countries in their preparatory programmes for the Fourth World Conference for Women. Furthermore, it called on the international community both to make substantial contributions to UNIFEM and to take measures that would allow the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to continue its work throughout the world.

54. Ms. RAMIREZ (Panama) said that despite the political and socio-economic changes that had permanently altered the international panorama, the status of women had not improved in line with the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Panama commended the World Conference on Human Rights for focusing special attention on the rights of women, and supported the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

55. The women of Panama faced glaring socio-economic problems. For every 100 homes, 22 had female heads of household. Average monthly income was $255.60, which was insufficient to cover the most basic necessities. Furthermore, 25 per cent of the female population over the age of 15 were unmarried to their partners. Growing numbers of women were participating in the workforce at all levels, attributable to education, the desire for economic independence and the need for two incomes. Most were, however, engaged in such traditional pursuits as domestic work, factory work and teaching, earning a commensurately low wage. Panamanian women needed to be encouraged to pursue non-professional trades and professions.

56. Her Government had instituted the Women, Health and Development Programme to promote the development of women through improved health and had created the National Intersectoral Commission for Women (CONAIM) to support that national programme, overseen by the Ministry of Health which was responsible for coordinating all relevant programmes and activities. Its objectives were to promote development strategies and policies to improve the health of women, to monitor the protection of rights of women, to fight against all forms of violence and discrimination against women, and to support programmes and services for the general welfare of women.

(Ms. Ramirez, Panama)

57. On the eve of the millennium, the great task at hand was to achieve the equal participation of women in political and economic life. Panamanian women were campaigning for greater representation in the next elections, and hoped to become an important voice in the national political future. Though 52.3 per cent of Panamanian voters were women, only 7 per cent held high office in the Legislative Assembly and in the Government.

58. Panama found the inadequate representation of women in the Secretariat troubling, especially in view of the strong interest on the part of the United Nations in the promotion of women, and hoped that stronger efforts would be made in that regard. Lastly, it set great store by the Fourth World Conference for Women and planned to participate in the preparatory process at all levels. The time had come to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to accord to women their just role in society.

59. Mrs. BIRAUD (France) said that France was in the course of making extensive preparations for the Fourth World Conference for Women. It had appointed a coordinator and would establish a national preparatory committee by the end of the year, made up of representatives from women's organizations, unions, the media, the national electorate, and the economic and agricultural spheres. In addition, a committee of scientific experts would assist the national preparatory committee in its work. Polls would be conducted to survey the viewpoints of youth, women and men, with regard to the role of women in society, and a similar questionnaire would be sent out to organizations. The results of those surveys would go into the preparation of a forward-looking assessment on the situation of women.

60. In the view of France, the Conference should take up the principal issues set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. There were several main thrusts: the participation of women in public life (participation in political and other forms of public life, and equality in decision-making); the participation of women in economic life (an assessment of the role of women in economic and decision-making bodies, in the creation of jobs and programmes, and so forth); the role of women in social life (the campaign against unemployment and marginalization, the needs of single parent families, the generational gap, national development, the integration of immigrants, and assistance to disadvantaged persons); and violence against women (rape, pornography, images of women in the media, AIDS, drugs).

61. France stressed that all the United Nations languages must be treated equally at the Conference, and all documentation distributed in all official languages, so as to represent justly the linguistic and cultural diversity of the international community. Furthermore, the NGO Forum, which would constitute one of the central components of the Beijing Conference, should ensure that all NGOs wishing to participate were permitted to do so, with a view to broadening linguistic and cultural representation.

62. France regretted that the reports of the Secretary-General concerned with the advancement of women had not been available until the day that the agenda item was introduced, thus hindering a genuine exchange of viewpoints. In the view of France, the linked problems of urban overcrowding and rural exodus could

(Mrs. Biraud, France)

only be solved by rural development. The inhabitants of rural zones immigrated towards cities in the hopes of finding work there. The jobs available for women, especially in developing countries, were the least skilled and the least secure, or involved in the informal sector. Increasingly, women left the countryside because living conditions were inadequate; adequate services must be made available in rural environments in order to prevent a rural exodus. Various ideas that figured in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and in the reports of the Secretary-General would need to be reformulated. In particular, women must be considered not as passive beneficiaries of development programmes but as agents of their own development. Development programmes should focus especially on health and education services.

63. In France, the Delegation for National Development and Regional Action had organized meetings of rural women to discuss improving services, transportation, and employment possibilities. But development policies in agriculture, small businesses and trade must also be implemented, and women must be provided with legal and economic options. Before women could fully participate in their own development, various obstacles had to be surmounted. France strongly supported UNIFEM whose programmes enabling women to make an income from their work served to halt the cycle of poverty.

64. In recent years, France had presented a resolution to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding the prevention and treatment of AIDS in women; the French Government had also launched AIDS prevention campaigns, including, in 1993, a televised public information campaign aimed at youth.

65. The report on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat had shown that the Organization was alarmingly far from achieving its goals with regard to the distribution of women by region of origin. Furthermore, in the current year the hiring of women had diminished. The mechanisms adopted to assure that qualified women candidates would be sought had been set aside owing to the recruitment freeze. Such emergency measures must not be permitted to become habitual.

66. France commended the plan of action for 1993 and 1994 prepared by the Office of Human Resources Management, which focused on the promotion of women. It also welcomed the statistics provided by the Secretariat with regard to the percentage of women in related organizations. But if those figures were to be truly representative of the situation of women, the breakdown of men and women in each category of post would also be necessary. In addition, Secretariat jobs in the areas of the economy and political affairs should be made available to greater numbers of women.

67. Her Government supported the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women which recognized the seriousness of a far too widespread and accepted phenomenon and could serve as a reference for other programmes aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women. In recent years, France had provided legal counselling and set up centres for women victims of violence, and had introduced ad hoc legislation, in particular, on sexual harassment. War crimes, rape and other acts of violence perpetrated against women should be condemned unconditionally. There were regions in the world

(Mrs. Biraud, France)

where such violence was being committed specifically against displaced women and refugees that were not winning the attention of the media.

68. The role of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be emphasized in anticipation of the Fourth World Conference on Women. France had presented its second periodic report to CEDAW and had engaged in a fruitful exchange of views with its members and experts.

69. The Fourth World Conference on Women would become part of a series of conferences on the environment, human rights, population and social development, and it was essential that women's issues were not minimized or sidestepped at those other conferences on the basis that they were to be addressed specifically at the 1995 conference. Perspectives for the advancement of women should be coordinated within the framework of those conferences, even though they might be viewed from different angles.

70. Ms. WONG (Australia) said that her country had long recognized that women's rights should be accepted as human rights, and violence against women as a violation of those human rights. One way of achieving that was to improve cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights treaty bodies.

71. Australia had made a major commitment to the elimination of violence against women at the national level and had worked hard, together with other countries, to develop a new instrument which dealt with the problem at the international level. The draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women was a significant initiative and should be adopted by the General Assembly at its current session.

72. Her delegation strongly supported the proposal that the Commission on Human Rights should consider appointing a special rapporteur on violence against women at its 1994 session. The effectiveness of such a rapporteur would depend on the willingness of the members of relevant bodies to act on his or her recommendations. A special rapporteur with investigative and reporting responsibilities could be instrumental in strengthening enforcement mechanisms of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

73. The Division for the Advancement of Women had an important role to play in developing action on other gender-related issues, such as the feminization of poverty, the role of women in development, refugees and migration, and in the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Her delegation looked forward to participating in the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development in Jakarta in 1994 and placed high priority on regional preparations for the 1995 Conference. Australia was currently supporting projects aimed at facilitating input from Pacific women's non-governmental organizations into the formal preparatory activities for the Conference.

74. While there had been considerable progress in achieving greater legal equality, de facto equality still eluded most women. Their contribution to

(Ms. Wong, Australia)

society continued to be undervalued or ignored, and sex stereotyping remained one of the most firmly entrenched obstacles to the elimination of discrimination. If the 1995 Conference was to be a success, it should produce lasting outcomes at the national level. Ultimately, improvements of the status of women at the international level depended on the priority which individual Governments accorded to women's issues.

75. Ms. HASSANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that persistent violence against women was a major obstacle to the realization of their rights and freedoms. The latest form of violence against women was being used to gain political domination. The savage crimes committed by the Serbs against the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted a key weapon in the policy of ethnic cleansing. Such unprecedented acts against women proved that unless the root causes of world problems were addressed, the situation of women would only worsen.

76. Educational programmes to enhance women's awareness of their rights would reduce instances of violence against them. Greater education among women would significantly increase their participation in economic and social development, thereby strengthening the overall fabric of society. Women's contribution to economic and social development should be highlighted through the allocation of necessary resources and Governments' political commitment to educate the public. International conferences devoted to improving the economic conditions of rural women were needed to promote the exchange of ideas and national experiences and to formulate the most practical solutions.

77. Since its inception, the Islamic Republic of Iran had acknowledged women's valuable contributions and had implemented extensive programmes to improve their conditions. A special adviser for women's affairs had been appointed and various national organizations concerned with the specific problems of rural women had been established. There had also been a greater number of women candidates running for Parliament, new legislation on women's rights and increased participation of women in managerial positions and in the health services.

78. The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 would provide an opportunity: to investigate the difficulties that women still faced; and to seek constructive solutions and ways for achieving the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

79. Mr. BHANDARE (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Pakistan had once again spoken before the Committee, under an unrelated agenda item on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. India had traditionally respected women's role in society and had never denigrated or subjected women to discriminatory laws. It was unthinkable that the Government of India would condone crimes against women as a matter of policy, as Pakistan had falsely alleged. In fact, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir was a direct result of terrorism, inspired, aided and abetted by Pakistan from across the border. While there had been several instances of abuse of women in recent history in Pakistan, it was not the intention of his delegation to recount those atrocities before the Committee.

80. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation had deliberately refrained from enumerating the countless crimes committed against women in Jammu and Kashmir by Indian security forces. There had been several reports attesting to the systematic policy of humiliation and degradation of women in Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian occupation army. His delegation had previously suggested that the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan should accept a United Nations fact-finding mission to ascertain, impartially, the facts of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir; he was reiterating the offer in order to determine the validity of the accusations made by Pakistan and included in various reports of international organizations.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.